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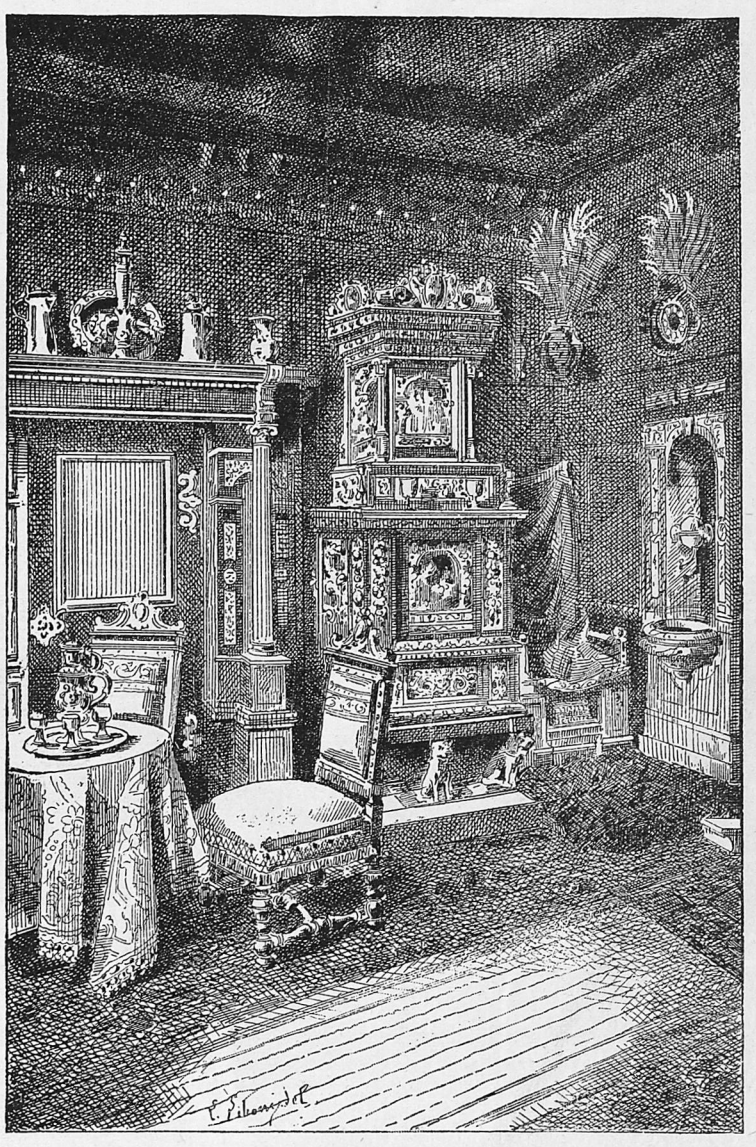
DECORATION & FURNITURE

EXAMPLES OF MODERN FURNITURE.

OF the exhibitions of furniture held lately in London, Bordeaux, Hamburg, and Nuremberg, none has been more interesting than that in the last named city. The first of our illustrations shows part of a bedroom with furniture by Eysser of Bayreuth, and a remarkably beautiful porcelain stove by Seiler of the same city. Six manufacturers of Kulenbach combined in fitting up a large room in imitation of one in the historical château of Plasenbourg, and succeeded admirably. At the Hamburg exhibition twenty complete rooms were fitted up with all the subsidiary adjuncts of well-furnished apartments, and the general effect is said to have been extremely good. The paperhangings of each room were arranged to match the furniture, and a great number of decorative objects were contributed by local dealers in ornamental ware. One half of the apartments were fitted up as bedrooms, eight as drawing-rooms, and two as living-rooms. The object of the display was to show what the local furniture industry could produce, due attention being paid to the requirements of good taste, solid workmanship, and economy in price.

Somewhat in contrast with our illustration of the Nuremberg bedroom fitted in the style of the German Renaissance is the decidedly modern English dining-room which is shown on the next page. There is a decided suggestion of comfort in the alcove fireplace with convenient book-shelf, the cosy settees on either side of the open grate, the warm Oriental rugs scattered about the floor, and the inviting arm-chairs.

Useful suggestions for decoration and furniture may be found in both of these interiors. For more immediate practical value we give on page 46 a design for a hanging bookcase, so simple that it could almost be carried out by a village carpenter, and a design for a sideboard with the upper portion partly inclosed with stained-glass doors. If the back of the upper cupboard should be removed and the sideboard be placed against some superfluous window where the light is strong, a beautiful effect of color might be produced, especially when the sun should strike the colored glass.



BED-CHAMBER WITH FAÏENCE STOVE AT THE NUREMBERG EXPOSITION.

FURNISHED BY EYSSER, SEILER, AND OTHER BAYREUTH MANUFACTURERS.

ECONOMY IN CARPETS, SCREENS, AND CURTAINS.

THE desire for a beautiful home is not confined to those who can gratify a taste as soon as they realize its existence. Throughout the world severe and sometimes even heroic struggles are going on all the time to find pleasure for the artistic nature in daily domestic surroundings, while yet the matter of dollars and cents stands like a roaring lion in the way. For such readers as these—who never spend a dollar without stretching it to its utmost buying capacity, and seldom think of an expended dollar without half wishing it had been otherwise spent, or not spent at all—a few hints are here gathered together for decorative furnishing at slight comparative expense.

The first item in house furnishing is usually carpets, or at least it was, until the present æsthetic rage for waxed floors and Oriental or Morris centre carpets. To this day, however, in thousands of homes, carpets covering every inch of the floor still hold their own, and probably always will do so in our climate of arctic winters, when waxed floors or even painted ones strike a chill to one's bones with their too vivid suggestion of frozen surfaces. It is rather curious to notice that France, Italy, and Germany, countries that have hitherto been wedded to bare floors and centre rugs, are now coming into the full use of unmitigated carpets in the corners as well as the middle of rooms, just as we are beginning to adopt their old mode of doing without. There is no gainsaying that carpets are warm and snug all winter, no matter how full of dust they became by spring, when they can easily be cleaned. A carpeted room has a cosy, homelike aspect which no room with a waxed floor can have, no matter how gorgeous or æsthetic its central Aubusson or Scinde, and it is certainly less trouble to keep it cleanly-looking, as all can testify who have had the care of polished wood floors showing every drop of water, boot-heel mark, or speck of dust.

The dull, neutral tints, the discharge of all color, which taste nowaday declares is true art, can easily be arrived at on our floors without leaving them bare, or paying great prices for "æsthetic" patterns. Many a prairie farmer's wife arrives at the consummation so devoutly wished for, but not always attained by her town acquaintances, and has an æsthetic carpet without knowing it, and unknown probably too by all who see it, or contributed to its making. In one of the prettiest artistic drawing-rooms in Rome, beneath fifteenth century carved oaks, tarsia of the seventeenth century, and mosaics worth a good many Turkey rugs, is a carpet of soft brown, woven in and out with delicate strands of golden-yellow. This yellow gives it a sunny flush and the effect is of dull russet gold. Everybody who sees the carpet for the first time speaks of its unique beauty, and then the artist hostess laughs, and explains that it cost her fifty cents a yard, and that it is made from cast-off woollen garments cut in strips and woven "hit or miss," that it is in fact nothing in the world but a "rag carpet," which she made herself in her leisure moments, believing that she could thus get the color she had set her heart upon better than by ransacking Italian stores.

Supposing our house furnished with similar carpets, a screen lately seen in a modest, artistic home, would be just the thing to go with them. This screen was two clothes-horses joined together to make four panels. One side had a pretty cretonne, pale blue with yellow primroses, put on and drawn taut from top to bottom. The other side was plain blue serge till within about half a yard from the base, where a dado of Lincrusta-Walton in imitation of stamped leather met it. This Lincrusta-Walton dado was "picked out" with gold, and a narrower band of the same gold leather divided the blue serge into panels. Another screen, similarly made, was of blue and silver-gray cretonne alternating as panels and with flowers, birds, and butterflies neatly cut out of chintz and artistically arranged upon them. Still another screen was of dark tea-green serge, upon which the maker had traced in chalk a design of bulrushes and foliage springing from water, with butterflies and birds hovering over them. The butterflies and birds were in ordinary tapestry-stitch, the water and lilies worked in simple outline, and the leaves and rushes scarcely more than indicated.

Curtains are of more importance than screens, and the ways of decorating them economically and yet tastefully are myriad. Who that remembers the silk patchwork of our mothers, those diagonal and rectangular blocks of more colors than Joseph's coat and like a fantastic checker-board in effect, is not glad that to-day gives us other uses for the brilliant scraps that accumulate in all well-regulated families? Pretty curtains are made of creamy cricketing flannel with handsome appliqué borders of silk, satin, velvet and plush, dexterously and artistically intermingled in designs of conventional flowers, and hovering, velvet-winged butterflies or humming-birds. Boldly and cleverly done they are wonderfully effective. Far more expensive curtains are of peacock plush, wrought in appliqué with satin daisies, sunflowers, pumpkin blossoms or broad-leaved lilies. Still others are of colored Madras muslin, rose, cream, or pale blue, and traced with a pattern in black, Renaissance, Greek, heraldic, or quaintly Gothic.

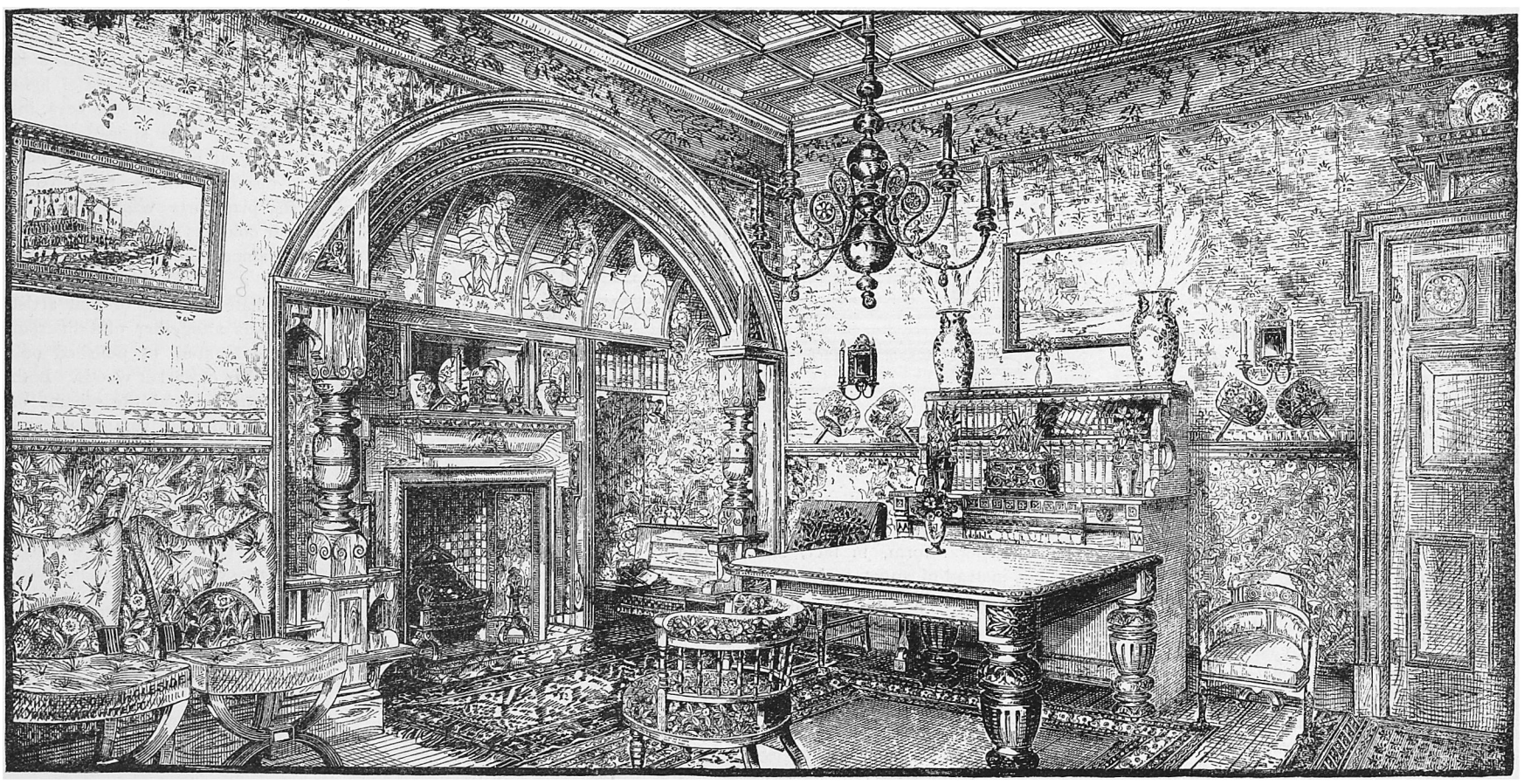
One set was of dull blue serge, with two broad bands of embroidery, one at the upper and one at the lower end. The pattern was blue velvet appliqué on strips of gold-colored satin sheeting, bordered with a narrow edge of blue velvet or velveteen. Another set was of unbleached cotton sheeting, with a border of blue linen worked with a flowing conventional design in large herring-bone stitch. Still another was similar to the last save that the sewed-on band was worked in grotesque animals with dragons' tails something like mediæval missal borders. A set of smoking-room curtains was made in cigar-brown satin sheeting, embroidered with the pale green leaves and flowers of the

tobacco plant. An effective manner of working such a curtain design is to outline all the forms, then work them in long over-stitch, the stitches confined only by the outline and veinings. The curtains were bound with amber-colored galoon, mounted with rings on a wooden bar suggesting a "long-nine" cigar, and looped back with strings of large imitation amber beads.

Another pretty and economical device, easily carried out, is seen on blue serge or cretonne, with a lace-like straw trimming as border, sewed on several inches from the edge. These have thick straw cords and tassels to match as well as a top band ornamented with the same trimming. A panel is left in the middle for a monogram to be laid on in straw cord.

Indeed there seems no end to the pretty fancies for curtains that may be wrought out with a little ingenuity and taste, at comparatively little expense. A delicate device for various sorts of ornamentation is white silk or satin medallions for appliqué, the medallions drawn in India ink or water color with classic figures, and then set in frames of embroidered flowers and ferns, a mixture of antique and modern ideas very pretty, even if a little anachronistic. Cream sheeting or flannel makes pretty curtains when decorated with bright poppies in Turkey-red cotton or velvet, the edges of the appliqué poppies being worked with coarse knitting cotton or gold purse silk. Another showy style of decoration consists in working with silk in simple long stitch any pattern already printed or woven on the fabric, thus entirely disguising its original appeaance.

MARGARET BERTHA WRIGHT.



A MODERN ENGLISH DINING-ROOM.

TWO NEW FRESCO SYSTEMS.

TWO systems of alleged indestructible fresco are reported from Europe. The first, that of Herr Hansen, the Austrian artist who is decorating in polychrome the Vienna House of Parliament, is put forward as a rediscovery of the Pompeiian method, arrived at chiefly by observation at Pompeii. In this, we read:

The surface of the wall is first covered with ordinary stucco, and then a thin layer of marble-dust of the colors required for the background is laid on like ordinary stucco lustro, and is rubbed smooth. Upon this the ornaments and figures are then drawn in the usual fresco colors, rubbed in with a little soap. Finally the whole is rubbed over with a smooth piece of hot iron, and the work is complete. By this process the paintings become intimately united with, and are in fact all of a piece with, the substratum, forming an integral part of the plastic mass.

The second method consists of certain improvements by Herr Keim, of Munich, in the already known stereo-chromatic process. For the merits of this is given a cogent voucher, being the report, just issued, of a committee appointed last spring by the Royal Bavarian Academy of Arts at Munich for the purpose of investigating the merits of the system. The report states, in effect, that the problem of rendering wall-paintings indestructible by climatic action has been solved by Herr Keim; and when the merits of the system are fully known, the committee believe that an important change is likely to take place in mural painting, monumental and decorative.

The system, founded upon the stereo-chromatic method of Schlotthauer and his fellow-workers, embodies improvements in the fundamental ground and the painting ground, in the preparation of the colors and the concluding fixing of the picture. We give the description of these improvements in the form published, which however seems occasionally obscure:

THE WALL GROUND.—The wall or fundamental ground is, in some respects, the same as that employed in the stereo-chromatic process, being a mortar composed of slaked lime, sand and water, which after drying, is flattened with rough sandstone, and afterward impregnated with soluble silicate of potash. Before applying this mortar it is necessary, in new buildings, that the walling should be perfectly dried; while in older buildings, the part of the wall intended to be treated should be laid bare to the stone, and the commissures scraped out.

THE PAINTING GROUND.—This consists, in the new process, of a mixture of four parts (by measure) of quartz sand, three and a half parts of marble sand, half part of fossil meal, and one part of quick-lime, which is stirred up with distilled water. The mass thus produced is strengthened by the admixture of carbonate of lime in the crystalline form of marble sand, which, from its rough and porous nature, readily absorbs the colors which are subsequently applied. The addition of silicic acid, finely decomposed in the form of fossil meal, promotes the formation of silicate of lime, and thereby increases the hardness of the material and its capacity to resist chemical and mechanical influences of a trying character.

THE COLORS.—After being thoroughly dried, this painting ground is saturated with silicic fluor acid, which destroys any crystalline particles of carbonate of lime which may be on the surface, and opens the pores of the material for the absorption of the colors to be laid on. According to the stereo-chromatic process the colors are only laid on with water: but by Herr Keim's system (as described) each color receives in its preparation a certain admixture of a nature suited to its special properties, which is intended to promote the solidity and durability of the work.

In order to prevent the darkening or lightening in the shade of certain tones of color, which is sometimes produced by the final application of the soluble glass used for the purpose of fixing, the colors receive before use an admixture of potash or ammonia. By this means they do not alter in shade, and the painter is saved the trouble of calculating what shade the color he is applying will be after it is subjected to the process of fixing. The colors are delivered by the factory almost ready for use; only requiring to be rendered thinner according to circumstances by the addition of water.

FIXING.—The fixing of the completed picture is finally by a wash of soluble glass containing an admixture of caustic potash and caustic ammonia. This is not applied cold, but warm, to the wall surface, which has previously been dried to the stone. When the weather is cold or damp this drying is promoted by a specially constructed iron stove. To complete the process and to prevent the subsequent appearance of the alkali, which becomes free in the form of a white dusky coating, the fixed picture is again treated with carbonate of ammonia. For subsequent cleanings washing with water is sufficient.

It is stated as an illustration of the weather-resisting properties of wall paintings executed according to the Keim system, that such a picture was buried during the whole winter of 1880 in the snow under a gutter, without the slightest injury resulting. The committee to which allusion has been made has further established the fact that the placing in cold or hot water, and the application with brushes of water, alkalies, diluted and even concentrated acids, produced no injurious effects worth naming, and that the pictures thus experimented upon continued after these tests to display hardness and imperviousness to mechanical influences.

Apart from these properties of resistance to the effects of climate, the clear white painting ground, it is said, shows up the colors, particularly ultramarine shades, in a bright and effective manner. The paints

are easily applied and blend well together; the production of a pleasing and harmonious effect being facilitated in many ways by the process of Herr Keim.

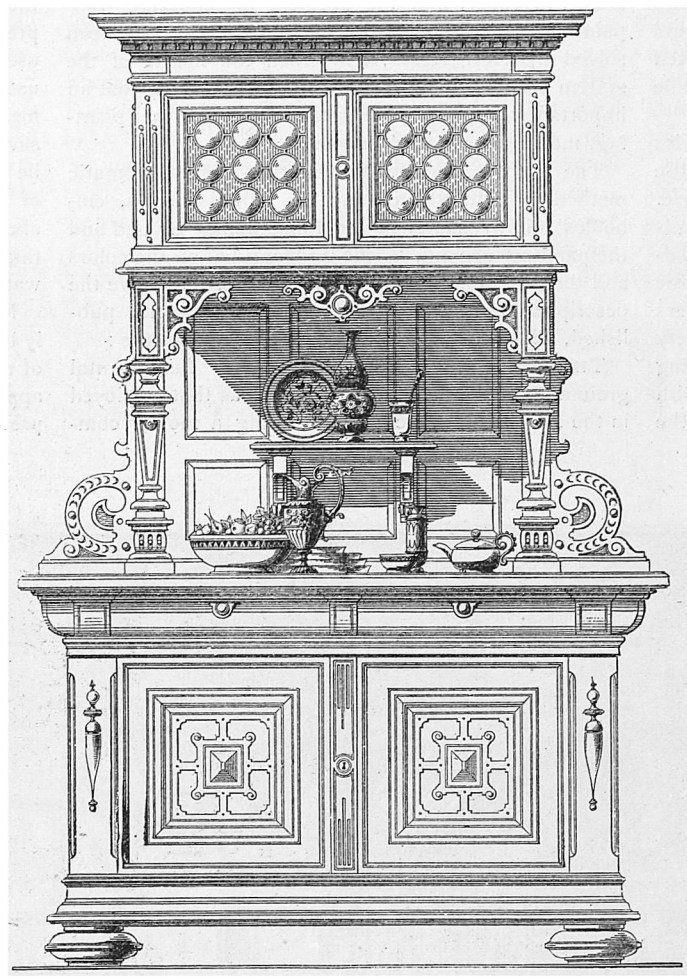
OLD PERSIAN CARPETS.

WENTWORTH BULLER has been for some two years making investigations into the history and modes of manufacture of Oriental carpets, both ancient and modern. Until these investigations began, he had supposed all carpets to be of wool, and for a year or more sought in vain to imitate a Persian carpet, till at last having recourse to a microscope in order to ascertain the real material of the finest specimens, he found that the hair of four animals had been used. These were the common and the Bactrian camel, the yak, and the long-haired goat. It became clear at once why English attempts to imitate Oriental carpets had failed, it being impossible to produce the same effect from two distinct materials. It was also made clear why a Persian rug in use for years will show no signs of dirt or grime, while a carpet with long wool is soiled in a season. The stiff goat's hair cannot retain grime, while dust shakes off from it at once. The finest hair is difficult to obtain, and equally difficult to dye and spin, but it forms the larger part of the finest carpets, the colors of which are unaltered after several hundred years of use. Mr. Buller finds the chronology of carpets quite as easily settled as that of illuminated manuscripts, each century having its own types of ornament. A Persian carpet of the fourteenth or fifteenth century is a real work of art, having the same relation to an ordinary carpet that a picture of Titian has to a third-rate canvas in an auction-room. Then workman and designer were one, and the distinct separation of the two to-day is one reason for the failure in reproducing anything even approaching the old forms in merit. One carpet described in full required ten hours a day for twenty years, and could not be manufactured to-day for less than $20,000; and the carpets of the fine period have many of them 500 to 775 stitches to the inch, being worked on silk warps, with often the introduction of gold or silver thread.

ARTISTIC PIANOFORTES.

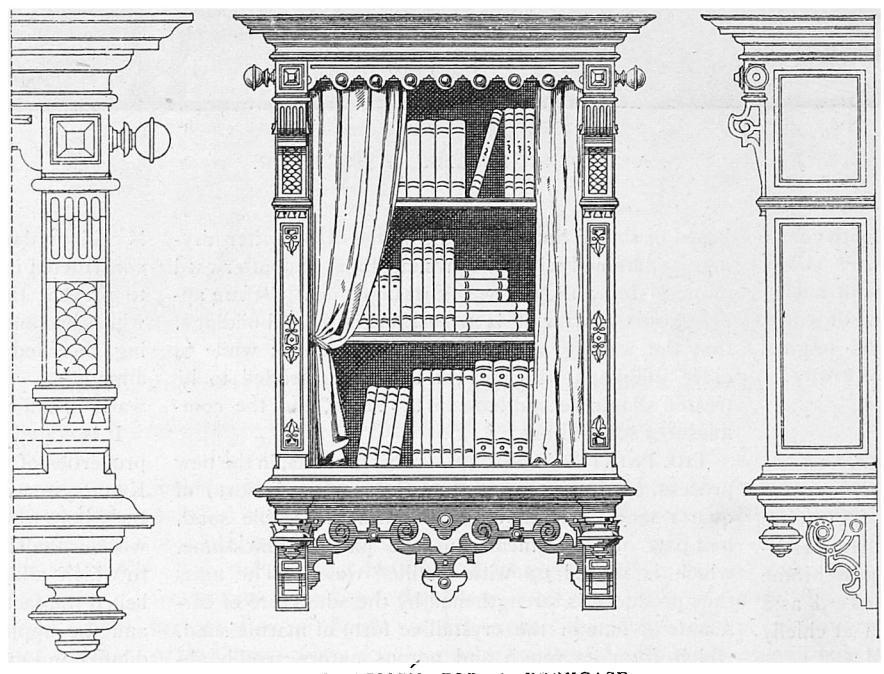
As our readers are doubtless aware by this time, next to our grievance against the makers of the hideous cast-iron stove we are especially concerned about the ugly piano-cases which the manufacturers continue to give us, resolutely ignoring the demand for something more in harmony with the progressive art spirit of the day. One of these days, perhaps, some one of the leading firms will show enterprise enough to pay an artist a fair price for an original design. Competing houses would be compelled to do the same, and the much-needed reform would be accomplished. It is even possible that one of them may awake to the wisdom of offering a handsome premium for the best design. In the meanwhile, we beg to submit for their consideration the models illustrated herewith as showing the possibilities in the direction we have indicated. In this generation of wealth and prodigal expenditure in the decoration and furnishing of the home, is there one pianoforte made in the United States to compare in artistic grace with the modest little Italian spinet of the sixteenth century, shown on the opposite page? If there be, it has not been our fortune to see it.

Let it not be supposed, however, that we ask for more "ornament." Far from it. The less "ornament" one has of the kind known by that name to the trade the better. Such "carving" as is usually produced by the wretched artisans entrusted with that branch of the decoration of the instrument is an abomination. What is most needed is good construction. The frame might be of oak or walnut, stained or oiled, instead of highly varnished as now seems to be the universal rule. Give it straight, slender legs—we are speaking particularly of the cottage piano—instead of the ponderous curved ones common now. The general form, in fact, should be trim and graceful instead of squat and ungainly as it is usually found. As a model for a "grand" pianoforte the second illustration shows some strong points in construction.



SIMPLE DESIGN FOR A SIDEBOARD.

(SEE PAGE 44.)



SIMPLE DESIGN FOR A BOOKCASE.

(SEE PAGE 44.)

In the grand pianoforte, designed by Burne Jones and made by the Broadwoods in London recently, the old harpsichord notion of a music-box upon trestles was adopted, the curves and lines being those conditioned by the length of the strings.

The outside of the case, the cover, and stand, were painted in oil, in quiet harmonies of olive green and brown; in panelling round the case were disks, wherein were portrayed the story and fate of Orpheus and Eurydice. On these designs the painter bestowed his well-known talent; the incidents in the earthly and lower region, with the death, at last, of Orpheus, being all told in lighter and most delicate tones of color. The top of the cover was enriched with a bold design of the oleander foliage; at the wider end was a muse, emerging from a winged circle and handing to a poet, recumbent beneath her, a theme, "Ne oublie," the motto of the owner of the instrument, while the poet recites a poem from the Vita Nuova.

Outside all was sober; inside all was brightness; the soundboard and iron framing, the desk, and recess round the keyboard, being entirely gilt, while, when the cover is raised, a vivid allegorical painting is visible. The soundboard is covered with roses, all painted by Mr. Jones; and rose-leaves blow about, singly or in heaps, over the diapered pattern which, also painted in oil, covers the gilt metal plate.

A former piano designed by Burne Jones had the case of oak, full of delicate figure, and stained with a transparent stain a beautiful shade of olive green, the variations in the wood allowing of a subtle play of light and shade. The dark or chromatic keys, instead of being black, were stained a vivid green-blue, striking at once a splendid harmony, akin to discord, with the fine olive of the case. This pianoforte was more fully described in our columns about a year ago, as was also the famous one of Alma Tadema. This latter, also a grand, was carried out under the immediate direction of that artist for himself. It was altogether of a different cast, being a combination of polished oak and ivory, with inlays of darker woods. Both the structural formation and the scheme of decoration partook of that sumptuous and massive character which one naturally associates with the architectural portions of Alma Tadema's pictures. The Assyrian or Egyptian "motif" of the supports, and of the equally massive music-seat with its solid ivory enrichments, was distinctive, and the result successful from a practical point of view.

A NEW METHOD OF INLAYING WOOD.

A NEW method of inlaying wood has been contrived by a furniture-manufacturing house, the process of which is as follows: A veneer of the same wood as that of which the design to be inlaid consists—say sycamore—is glued entirely over the surface of any hard wood, such as walnut, and allowed to dry thoroughly. The design is then cut out of a zinc plate, about one twentieth of an inch in thickness, and placed upon the veneer. The whole is now subjected to the action of steam, and made to travel between two powerful cast-iron rollers of eight inches in diameter, two feet long, two above and two below, which may be brought within any distance of each other by screws. The enormous pressure to which the zinc plate is subjected forces it completely into the veneer, and the veneer into the solid wood beneath it, while the zinc curls up out of the matrix it has thus formed, and comes away easily. All that now remains to be done is to plane down the veneer left untouched by the zinc, until a thin shaving is taken off the portion forced into the walnut, when, the surface being perfectly smooth, the operation